

REACTION TO THE FRENCH COLONIZATION OF INDO-CHINA

drive out the Western barbarians. This movement was essentially Chinese in its anti-foreign motivation, and eminently Annamite in that it was embroiled in discreditable financial difficulties from the outset. A *cahier des doléances* of the Young Annamites, presented to Governor Clementel at about the same time, is more constructive in its aim. It protested principally against the Franco-Russian alliance and the arbitrary arrests of innocent Annamites, later exiled to the Poulo Condore penitentiary. This protest was only temporarily effective, for the pre-War period known as the Era of Plots saw severe repressions of these outbreaks. A new conspiracy was announced daily; colonials in a panic demanded "protection," and denounced the liberal policies of Beau, Klobukowsky, and Sarraut as responsible.

While these uprisings were evidence of popular discontent, a more constructive criticism of the government than throwing bombs and cutting hair was to be found in the letters of two mandarins, Tran Ba Loe and Phan Chau Trinh.¹ The former attacked France's assimilationist policy in a report he had been asked to make on a new state project. His chief criticism was directed against the new mandarinat installed by the French, especially their arbitrary and extortionate methods. Phan Chau Trinh's letter to the Resident Superior of Tonkin was unsolicited and was the first native effort to inform a high official directly of the country's misery. He blamed the growing abyss between French and Annamites upon the former's disdain for the latter, and neglect of their duties as colonizers. The new mandarins profited by this estrangement to indulge their vanity and their cruelty, while their predecessors were absorbed in a futile regret of the

past. If the upper class had lost all its dignity the masses were crushed by taxes and misery, and the country was relapsing into a state of semi-barbarism. If Phan Chau Trinh did not spare the French he was far harder on his own people. They had only themselves to blame. If the Emperor had studied how to improve his country, if the upper classes had done something besides amuse themselves, if commerce and industry had been developed, their energies would not have been absorbed by sterile civil wars. It would be futile to throw off the French yoke. Another master, perhaps worse, was inevitable, given the country's inherent weaknesses, France should stay, but take up her colonizing task more scrupulously. The author of this courageous letter was condemned to death by the Court of Hue, but Klobukowsky commuted this penalty.

¹ Tran Ba Loe, *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, vol. 2 (Saigon, 1880), p. 148. BaSeHn Efeo (Hanoi, 1907), p. 166.